# The Sky Glass Rail

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/22987783.

| | |
|---|---|
| Rating: | General Audiences |
| Archive Warning: | Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings |
| Category: | Gen |
| Fandom: | Epithet Erased (Cartoon) |
| Relationships: | Molly Blyndeff & Giovanni Potage, Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling & Molly Blyndeff, Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling & Giovanni Potage, Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling & Molly Blyndeff & Giovanni Potage |
| Characters: | Molly Blyndeff, Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling, Giovanni Potage |
| Additional Tags: | Hurt/Comfort, Mentions of other characters - Freeform, Emotional Hurt/Comfort |
| Language: | English |
| Stats: | Published: 2020-03-02 Words: 7,463 Chapters: 1/1 |

# The Sky Glass Rail

by AsilandWriting

Summary

Or: How to become friends a second time after realizing that you didn’t do it right initially and you need to rectify it since certain doom is coming your way and you might not get another chance afterwards.

Notes

I've gotten really sweet messages in my earlier works and a lot mentioned they would love Sylvie to open up to Molly about the Epithet Erasure incident. And since I couldn't resist, I made it the tiniest bit more interesting, with him doing it while on the way to confronting the Big Final Boss. Not by much, they essentially just talk, no fighting or Bliss Ocean Members popping up, but I wanted a little bit of high stake tension, if that makes sense, haha.

Also: Blame the music piece Oracion from the Pokémon movie 10 for all of this; I've been listening to it for hours it and made me more emotional than ever.

See the end of the work for more notes

Any other 12-year-old would have maybe been excited by the prospect of travelling to a part of the world known as the home base of the strongest, biggest Mundie terrorist group to have ever existed. They would have maybe been excited to know that they were part of a group to stop them from hurting more Inscribed people, knowing they were part of a plan to overthrow a literal mafia. They might have even been excited to travel in the Glass Sky Rail, the fastest train there was, the world passing by in a blur of colors towards their destination, where a fight of epic proportions would play out.

Molly for sure wasn't that 12-year-old.

She was still standing idly in the middle of a wagon, inspecting the see-through floor underneath her feet, as if gaging if it could break into thousands and millions of shards if she stomped down too hard. She didn't dare lift her foot however to try, the ocean was a deep blue and if something or someone was creeping down there, she didn't want to startle it and make it come her direction. She didn't believe in sea monsters exactly, but people were most of the time worse than monsters anyway; people with dangerous Epithets even more so, able to do anything. Lurking, maybe oozing poison into the air between the cracks of the train or manifesting dark matter to swallow one whole or electrocute them in a blast of light or… something, anything. Ocean people could breathe underwater after all, everything was possible and everything and anything could stop their try right at the root.

She wasn't even sure how they had managed to nab one of the trains for themselves without anybody getting suspicious. She was aware that Percy had told her they had the cowgirl bounty hunter on "their side of the law" (For now, maybe, was it a lie? A trick? Were they walking into a trap?) who was distracting the members of Bliss Ocean. She thinks she even met her, (Zora, she believed) and she for sure looked like someone who could hold her own. Still, it felt too easy right now, as if any moment the train could stop, that it could roll backwards, or worse, just go off the rails and plumage them into the depths of water below.

Molly had to shake her head, trying to ponder over her surroundings instead to distract from the gloomy thoughts, her eyes wandering away from the deep dark to sky blue.

Literally almost every surface surrounding her was glass, she could see for miles out, the city skyline hovering over the wet surface. Clouds were hanging overhead, the blue turning slowly to grey, and she was sure that was just how the world worked; as soon as something bad was happening the weather played with. The parts that weren't miraculously glass were pure white or cream-colored steel, and the seats, instead of being in rows of twos or fours on each side with a middle way to walk through, were positioned along both sides of the wagon. From where she stood, she could have spread her arms out and fit three of herself in the train's width comfortably without touching.

She counted 6 couch-sized seats on each side, positioned lengthwise so you had the view behind you. They were the only things that had an accent of color, red lines that covered the seams and vanished towards the roof into the lamps that hung there.

Following the lines towards the door in front of her, she wondered if the red was deliberate; her heart starting to hammer lightly as her imagination was running away from her.

Letting out a breath to steady herself, Giovanni glanced over, a brow rising.

He had positioned himself near the end of the door she had stared at, baseball bat by his side and ready to swing it at a second's notice if anyone planned to get in. He didn't look tense at a first glance, slouching a bit, his legs crossed while he stood leaning against his bat with his two arms crossed on top of it, but his jaw was set, and Molly knew that meant he was concentrating. However, he had seemed to notice her spiraling and with a snap of his hand upwards waved at her, before giving a thumbs up to reassure her, the biggest possible smile on his face.

She grinned back, her own thumb lifting, before she watched him get back into brooding.

Behind her she could suddenly hear Ramsey argue loudly through the door and Molly sneaked a bit closer to the other side of the wagon, wondering what would raise his voice. She could imagine very well that Percy, who had gone with him, had the same position taken as Giovanni, her sword for sure at the ready, and Molly really hoped no one would enter through their wagon; she wished it on no one, not even their enemies. A bat to the face was one thing, a sword through the chest another.

From the little window she peeked through she could see that the policewoman stood straight as a rod (as expected) looking like it must hurt at this point. Or maybe she was just used to it, her spine puffing her chest out. Ramsey reminded her once again with a worried scoff of that, loud enough for Molly to decipher and he was sitting beside her on the seats, arms behind his back and spreading his body on top of one of the couches. He seemed the most wired when they had entered if you asked her, probably already trying to cope with the thought of them all dying, Molly wasn't sure. Watching Ramsey stand up and pull at Percy's hand, so she would at least stand normally, the girl turned yet again, her eyes roaming to the other seats of her wagon.

Most were empty of course, since the rest of their team were spread through the other train wagons as well.

Percy had insisted that they all need to keep an eye out and if they were all coped up in one part of the train, it would prove to be a prison if they got surrounded. Everybody had agreed, but the fact that the split had been rather uncomfortable was still fresh on Molly's mind.

Rick was out there with Indus, the two of them pleading they take the engine so they could make sure no one would sneak through; and honestly, if anyone could without them making any ruckus, it would be a miracle. Plus, Indus seemed excited at the prospect to let the train pipe honk, at least once.

(And he did get his wish so hopefully there would be no other shrill blast.)

She hoped Trixie and Phoenicia were okay as well, but since Mera was with them, she wasn't too worried. She might be a glass canon, but she sure was strong, and she was more than proud enough to not let anybody get hurt specifically under her watch; she could take them all on.

It made sense that the strongest would stay with the weakest, to balance things out, but, urgh… strategy sucked. You never knew if it would turn out great or into a haunted house scenario, split up and everybody vanishing and stuff and whatever.

She had a good rag tag team on her side, she was glad they were all here.

But she also wished they were all safe at home.

She swallowed hard, her heart sinking, before her eyes finally fell on the last member.

Sylvie was seated somewhere in the middle of the, honestly way too long, side couch, head leaning against the glass and staring out with a blank expression on his face. It didn't look like he was overthinking this time, though, just watching as the world passed by, his glasses clinking with the glass of the window when the railway jumped. Legs were kicking under him and it looked like he was swinging them to the beat of the train. Or maybe he was just following a beat in his head, mute to her ears, Molly noticing him sitting on his hands, as if worried that he could wave them out.

Another thing they had agreed upon, no use of Epithets until they arrived and got into combat.

They needed their stamina at full capacity, which meant she couldn't use her silence bubble to block out the rattling of the train or dumb down the anxiety that was creeping into her chest. And from the looks of it was Sylvie trying his near hardest to not let a sheep appear, so he could have something to grab onto.

Deciding that standing was no option anymore, she stepped closer to Sylvie, before she took the seat beside him, letting out a small sigh as her wobbly legs rested. For a moment she pondered if she should watch the scenery too, but then the colors started to swirl and her stomach churned uncomfortably, opting to stare at the ground again.

A moment of half-silence filled her, eyes training on the one spot where she could make out a speck of split glass on the ground, the blue waves crashing underneath it, but unable to wash it away, before the voice beside her shook her out of it again.

"You okay?"

She pondered for a second, not daring to look up, before she meekly shoved her hands into her sleeves.

"I'm scared."

"Yeah. Me, too."

The first instinct she had was to give an approving nod, on one hand to agree but also to show she was glad he was being honest. After all this time they spend together he had gotten better at being truthful with his feelings, so she nodded her head a second time, before she let it fall onto her chest, exhaustion pulling at her.

“What are we going to do?” she mumbled, “There is no way we can beat them in a fair fight. And if it’s a dirty fight, they will have the upper hand on us. We pick the shorter straw no matter what we do. They will swipe us off the floor.” A sigh escaped her. “Why are we even trying?”

“Well… Most of us decided that we can’t let people get hurt, remember? Percival is doing it for justice, Ramsey is doing it for her. Mera does it so she can use the necklace on herself and Indus to stop her…” Sylvie listed, shrugging, “Giovanni is doing it so he can beat the Banzai Blaster officials and take his minions back “legally” …? Please don’t ask me how that works.”

“It makes perfect sense, thank you very much!” Giovanni hollered over his shoulder, “I promised Perc after all!”

“Of course, I never questioned your integrity, I swear.”

“Good, because I got a bat!”

A giggle escaped Molly, before Sylvie continued, unbothered.

“I’m doing it to help, too… Not as justified as anyone else, really, but…” he let his head knock back against the glass, his voice lowering, shifting his weight so he could lift one of his legs up and curl it against his chest, his right arm looping around it. “It’s not going to be long anymore, if we really hit no bumps in the road, be it rail or Bliss Ocean problems, we will approximately arrive in half an hour.”

Molly hummed, as she followed his gaze, nearing their destination with every minute, the horizon spreading like a blanket to engulf them in. Molly couldn’t tell where they were headed anymore, if the train had gone south or north, it was still bright day, but the clouds were rolling in. Wherever the station would be, they would need to figure out the headquarters fast, and even though they had prepared for pretty much anything, they could never know.

Once again, the view made her sick to her stomach and she closed her eyes, letting her head fall back. A nap sounded good right about now, but she couldn’t get into enemy territory all groggy, forcing her eyes to stare at the ceiling and trailing after red once more.

“Why did you come then? If you have no real reason?”

Molly knew Sylvie had come, because he was still interested in the amulet.

She wasn’t sure why she asked so bluntly, maybe the swirls of red had twisted her thoughts, or maybe the noise of bumping metal had clouded her judgement. But she couldn’t help herself being curious.

And that is why his answer made a chill run up her spine.

“No one should have their Epithet taken away. Not when I can do something about it.”

Molly didn’t dare look to the side, but she bit the inside of her cheek at his voice.

“Not with my friends on the line.”

He sounded earnest, angrily determined and, if she was honest, not half as upset as she had hoped it would come out.

At first, she thought he’d go on a tangent, maybe, finally tell her how it had felt in the first place, to have it have taken. But, no, he really just wanted to stop it from ever happening again to anybody else. No self-pity, no explanations, just a grim expression on his face, which she finally saw after she dared to blink and peek at him from the corner of her vision.

It didn’t sit right with her, him worrying about them, making her squirm in her seat even more.

“… I’m sorry.”

The apology seemed to rattle him a bit, eyes leaving the horizon and he waved his hand as if to swipe the words away. Almost immediately he sat on it again, an embarrassed laugh leaving him as the golden dust wafted out, betraying his nerves once more.

“You didn’t say anything wrong; I get it. It’s pretty stupid of us to walk into a lion’s den, only because it might be that people will get hurt. But… I suppose we all still care enough to do so anyway. I guess I’m just trying to rile myself up, remind myself why I’m here. Psychologist and helping people and all that.”

“No, that’s not what I meant.” Molly huffed instead, her hands curling up in her sleeves, turning her knuckles pale, “You’re right, no one deserves that. No one deserves to have their Epithet taken away.” Quieter, softer. “You didn’t deserve that.”

The energy left her, as she folded her hands into each other, biting her lips.

“I… I’m really sorry.”

“For what exactly? That Mera stole it? Wasn’t your decision. That I trusted her and she almost got away with manipulating me? That was on me. For me stepping in when I realized I was a doofus for hurting you two? Clearly was a good thing.” With every point he listed one finger sprung from his closed fist, before he pointed at Molly almost accusingly. “It wasn’t your fault at all. We talked about that.”

“Yeah, but I don’t mean that, either!”

Frustration was building and she could feel the pressure of tears against her eyelids, a sniff leaving her. She wanted to articulate what she meant, but for a second she was too upset to say anything, not knowing how she could get her point across without it being misunderstood. She could almost hear Sylvie’s gears turn in his head, trying to figure out what she now actually meant, and she didn’t miss the quiet turn of his head towards Giovanni, waving his hands around her as if he was asking what he should do.

The answer must have been a helpless shrug, or more like a wave of “Figure it out yourself, idiot!” for Sylvie stuck his tongue out at him, before he was mentally preparing himself to go

into full therapist mode.

Molly however bested him, as she shook her head.

“Back at the museum, when I said, I’d be your friend. I…- I didn’t actually mean it. I just said that, because we needed someone to help us fight. I meant to tell you sooner, but things happened and- “

Sylvie let out a small “Oh!” before she could continue with her ramblings, shrugging immediately.

“I knew already that you lied to me.”

That made the girl almost stumble out of her seat, sitting up only then to fall back in as the train lurched in the same instance. Sylvie grabbed her by the scruff of her coat to keep her steady and she landed back in her seat with a small wheeze, eyes wide as she looked back at him.

“You knew?” she gasped, voice shaking, lowering it to a whisper, “How long? Since when?”

“The moment you opened your mouth back then…? I mean…” He awkwardly let go of her hoodie and curled one hand around his lifted leg once more, the other one wandering behind his head, rubbing his neck. “I was a real jackass to you. I didn’t believe you would actually want to be friends after Nightmare Fuel, that’s why.”

Molly took the information in, before she blinked and she let herself lean into the cushion, as if she wanted to hide in it.

“You knew that I…? “

“-used me? Sure did. But on the other hand, that was the only smart move to make. If I had been you, I’d done the same. In some way.”

Sounding so calm about this, as if it was an easy enough resolution to a problem she had agonized over for months now, it made her feel like filled with lead. She had no idea that she had been so obvious, or had Sylvie just had enough time in the hospital and around her to realize that it had been a big act? And not only after, he knew while he walked beside them towards Mera and Indus, knowing she had never meant it in the first place.

And still he had-

“… why did you help me then?”

“Mh?”

“If you knew, if you knew from the start… you could have just let Mera take my Epithet. You didn’t have to… step in. Or care.”

Once again Sylvie shifted and it felt like the seats were becoming too small too fast, narrowing down so she had to sit closer to him than necessary. The two of them weren’t

touching, but it felt like they were, uncomfortably squished. Molly had tried to stay low so Giovanni wouldn't look over and ask himself what the hell they were mumbling about, but that was already a lost cause. Even though he was pointily watching the door, she knew exactly he was listening in, and the wagon was carrying sound too well to hope he wouldn't make them out.

Sylvie kept quiet for a long while, before he took off his glasses with both of his hands gripping the frame. His one hand then retreated into his sleeve and with the excess cloth he started to clean them absentmindedly, as if trying to remember why he had stopped Mera while doing something productive. Molly noted the dark circles under his eyes, putting her hand to her own face and finding the same result, sleepless nights catching up to both of them. Shaking herself off, Molly hoped he would tell her that his reason was adrenalin, or simply an unconscious act or his psychologist mentality of helping others kicking in; anything that would make kind of sense.

A reason that would stop her heart from beating out of her throat.

Before her thoughts could run away from her again, he sighed, glasses back in place, and he put his elbow on the windowsill, his hand supporting his chin. Thanks to the sun shining in, she couldn't see his eyes anymore, and it made her unbelievable angry, her chest bubbling with heat, the only thing on her mind now to rip the stupid glasses off his face so she could read him.

Her hands were already slipping out of her sleeves, when he started up again.

"The idea was enough."

"What idea?"

"Of having a friend."

Molly's mouth opened, but nothing came out.

"I never had friends before. I had acquaintances, people I knew and talked to on a daily basis, but that has nothing to do with friends, what they are supposed to be. And the idea, that you maybe could have meant it; that was enough."

Molly didn't even have the time to prepare herself mentally before her body reacted, a gigantic hollow gap opening up in her chest and her stomach dropping somewhere down below the ocean waves. Tears bubbled in her eyes the moment his words left his mouth and she pushed her hands against them, trying to keep them in. She had no right to cry right now, she refused, but she started shaking, the guilt rendering her speechless.

For a moment all she could do was hold the hiccups in, because she knew if she was too loud Giovanni would come over in a try to help her calm down, to ask what was wrong, and she couldn't explain herself to him. She couldn't even explain herself to Sylvie at this point. The hand that settled on her shoulder, shacking her and the distinct, gentle murmur telling her that it's okay were not enough, Molly curling up into herself tighter. Tears dribbled down her chin and she felt herself become disgusting; snot forcefully being pulled back into her nose.

“But I didn’t mean it!”

She felt even more disgusting.

“You knew from second one I didn’t want to be friends! I didn’t mean it and you knew! You should have let me lose my Epithet instead!” She choked out, the hands on her shoulders faltering, only then to grip harder, “You wouldn’t have gotten hurt; it should have been me! You wouldn’t have any reason to be here if it hadn’t happened!”

“Molly!”

“NO!” she yelled, the promise to not blast out a silence bubble right after only held by the sheer amount of fear of what could happen after they arrived at the shore, „You just said it yourself! You only helped because you thought we could be friends! But I wasn’t! And you knew I wasn’t! And still you are here, and we might all die, and you came with, because I dragged you into this!”

“Technically MY sleeping dust did get onto YOU, so it was pretty much my own fault then. If we follow that logic.”

Molly wanted to do so many things in that instant, stand up and run into another wagon, stomp her foot and let the ground shatter, cast a bubble to make him shut up and listen or just push him in general off of her. But all she did was hiccup more, the scream from before having taken her breath away. After a round of taking air in deeply, trying to clean her face as best she could with the back of her hands, she noted that Sylvie was still keeping her steady by one shoulder, as if afraid she might fall if he didn’t.

“You’re right,” Sylvie then finally relented, Molly’s breath hitching, “You weren’t my friend when I stopped Mera. And I’m not blaming you for that, so you shouldn’t either.”

Molly wanted to curl into herself more than she already had, her knees up to her chin, arms looped around them. Hiding her face, she tried in vain to find words. But this time Sylvie was the one to take the opportunity.

“That night at the museum, no one really knew what would happen. I don’t blame you for taking advantage of me. If I had been more observant, we could have maybe started on the right foot, but we didn’t. We really weren’t friends, because we didn’t know each other, and it was a complicated situation.”

His voice wavered then.

“But aren’t we now?”

With a snap her head moved up, mouth shut in a thin line, and she registered Giovanni standing straighter at his post by the door, pointily not looking their direction, as if he knew interfering would be a bad decision on his part. She could almost see him wanting to walk over and shake the boy, and she would have done it, too, if Sylvie hadn’t butted in once more.

“The second time, when I asked you if you meant it; I was fully convinced you wouldn’t continue the charade. You wouldn’t have had any reason to, so I wanted to rip the bandage off.” His hand finally left her shoulder to push his glasses back up his nose. “But you did stay. And I guess, at the time it was because… let’s face it, sacrificing myself there gave me a bonus point.”

Molly shrieked a loud: “SYLVIE!” in response.

“It’s true though, isn’t it? I redeemed myself right there. Well… partly, somewhat, which, you know, I’m glad for that.” He cringed at himself. “That sounded idiotic, not the glad part, the redeeming thing. I hurt you, there is no excuse for that-”

Immediately Molly grabbed his wrists and gripped them so hard that he winced, her face furious.

“You did redeem yourself! You did it already when you offered a session! Do you know how much that meant to me? We were fighting and still on fences, but you offered anyway… You just wanted to keep the amulet safe, I will never blame you for that.”

“So…” the stupidest smile spread on his face, “We both agree it’s just been a bad night, right? We are friends right now, nothing changed there.”

“Of course we are!”

“That’s all that matters.”

The way he delivered that small line was in the same instant the most uplifting thing she had heard all day, the only thing that had made it worth waking up this morning for at all, and was in the same exact breath the most vulnerable thing she had ever heard out of his mouth, as if he was reassuring himself. Molly kept holding his hands, trying to lessen her shaking, relief flooding her suddenly. Maybe she should have told him sooner, then they could have had the conversation not while riding to their inevitable doom, but she would take whatever she got.

“I’m kind of really happy you don’t want me here.”

Molly tilted her head.

“Huh?”

“I have plenty of reasons to be here, you know. Like I mentioned, my psychologist moral doesn’t let me shake the feeling that I have to be here to stop those people. Even though I know I’m walking right back into getting the thing that made one of my worst memories. At least top 3!”

He waved his hands up in exaggeration, Molly still being connected to them, moving them upwards as well, blinking at him. Sheepishly he lowered them and, with a tug, tried to peel her off, only for her silently to stay, his face turning softer.

“I’m also really selfish, back then I wanted to figure out how it works and forgot my own principles. Now? …At this point all I want is to destroy it, stomp on it with Beeftons hoof.

And not just me, most of us have reasons to be here and you tried your best to convince us to stay home." He looked to the side then, the approaching horizon cutting their time shorter and shorter, "You had no reason to follow us. Neither did Phoenica or Bellatrix. Not even Indus or Ramsey for that matter. All you care about is keeping us others safe, and that's…"

He shrugged helplessly.

"It's just nice being worried over. To have friends. I would never have gotten that if you hadn't lied to me that day."

Molly needed a second to think about Sylvie's words, only to let out a small giggle, her shoulders shaking and deciding a smile was better than to cry again. She felt overwhelmed, knowing that all of them cared for each other in SOME way now and it was hard to imagine not to. So much had happened and somehow all of them, as weird as it sounded and as impossible it was, they still were all here trying to fight something so much bigger than them. Even if only one of them had wanted to go, there would have been no way to shake the others off; all of them stuck together like glue.

Again, she was glad for every single one of the passengers on this glass train.

Still.

"I always worry. You all are…"

"Stupid?"

"I wanted to say reckless, but that fits, too."

Sylvie first scoffed as if he was wounded in his pride, before he let out a small snort, Molly noticing the small intake of breath he always did to cover his bleating one. Usually his genuine laugh turned all hiccup-y, silly and over the top, coming up whenever he completely forgot himself. And if she was honest, she would have preferred hearing him let it out right now instead of swallowing it down.

Before she could tell him however, he shook his head.

"That's why you have "Dumb" as your Epithet. Anyone looks stupid beside you."

For a second she couldn't quite make sense of what Sylvie had said, before, finally, a bright smile spread out on her face, her hands squeezing his lightly. Letting them go afterwards so she could clutch her knees instead, she noted her legs were cramping up, having sat like that for too long. Stretching her legs back down towards the floor, she shook them from side to side to get the crawling ant feeling out and after a pause, she looked back up again.

"You mean it?"

"Duh!" His freed arm positioned itself on his chest, turning his nose upwards, the smirk on his face betraying the seriousness he was trying to convey. "It takes a genius to beat a genius, that's clear as day!"

“That’s… such a nice thing to say about my Epithet…” Molly replied, her eyes first meandering to Giovanni, who was, very discreetly, switching between watching his fingernails and them with a proud smile, before wandering back to the ocean underneath her, foam settling onto the blue, “Usually… it’s Dumb after all, what do you make with that word? It’s dumb, I always thought it’s dumb. I didn’t… ever think that meant it makes me… smart? I guess?”

Sylvie was back to nestling his elbow on the windowsill, this time his eyes never leaving hers, shrugging with a smirk.

“Epithets are fascinating, aren’t they? It doesn’t matter what background a word has, where it came from or how useless it seems; they fit the person using them and makes them extraordinary. Be it because they shape the person, or the person shapes the word, the only important thing is that both are equal.”

He flicked his hand, but this time he was relaxed, the usual amount of glitter sticking to his skin.

“Sure, some people have trouble using them, others struggle with the downsides just like Mera does, again others never find them and stay Mundie’s for the rest of their life. But right in here?” He petted his chest, “It’s part of who you are, knowingly or not. It doesn’t matter who you are, it’s up to you what you make of that.”

Molly listened carefully, before she spoke up.

“What about Mera. What is your opinion on her Epithet?”

“Fragile is in itself loaded with bad connotations, but yet; there aren’t many people as strong as her, not as determined or focused. She is constantly in pain, but she pushes through anyway. Being fragile made her stronger than ever.”

He lifted a finger to his chin, before he tilted his head towards the window beside him.

“Her Epithet could have killed her. But it didn’t. And maybe that is exactly why she has it.”

“So… she wouldn’t be herself if Fragile wasn’t there to push her, right?”

“It’s hard to say. As a Mundie she must have already been weak and that is why she had her Epiphany so early. Synonyms and other must have been thrown a lot around her. It’s… your Epithet is part of your soul; you will come across it one way or another. Even if you thought your whole life there was no word that fit you, there is something that keeps you going.”

“Do you think every Mundie could turn Inscribed, then? If they tried hard enough?”

“I don’t know,” he smiled, “Maybe it’s on me to figure it out someday.”

For some reason that made Molly flood with reassurance, watching him stare out at their biggest challenge yet and talking about what he planned for afterwards. It’s as if there was no way they could lose, and the knot in her chest felt like it was being pulled open bit by bit, breathing easily again through her lungs. The small ball of calm that had been suffocating

was quietly spreading once more, chasing the fear away. Watching him be so genuinely passionate about a topic he clearly knew a lot about and cared so much for; she honestly wished him all the good luck in the world that he'd be the one to fit all the puzzle pieces together.

Though, now that she had a cleared, fresher mind, she noticed that his free hand stayed on his chest, still casually leaning by the window but gripping the area unconsciously.

"Sylvie?" she started up, her mouth turning dry, "What- "

"- did it feel like losing my Epithet?"

She had been wondering for months.

She had sometimes tried to imagine what it would feel like.

Having your Epithet ripped out, losing a bit of your soul.

It's what ghosts try to bargain for, Trixie telling her from time to time what words they threw around, and it made a chill run up her spine.

Molly never had the courage to bring it up casually, it never felt appropriate.

It never felt okay to ask.

Now though, when everything was going too smooth to be true anyway, she could try dipping her toe in and hope she would hit cool water instead of boiling lava, immediately regretting every choice she ever made.

"Yeah."

Waiting patiently for whatever response she would get, she noticed that Giovanni had squatted down, bat balancing on his knees and was fully staring at the two of them. Molly was honest when she said she almost forgot about him, the fact that he stood quiet and let them have time to settle things making her cheeks turn pink. He, once again, seemed to notice, and he shook his head, waving the embarrassment off. Mouthing a small "You got this", his bat swinging to the side as if he was patting her head from a distance, she let her eyes crinkle.

He always knew how to make her feel better.

When her head turned back to Sylvie, both his hands had wandered to his chest, his legs crossed underneath him.

"It's cold."

He let out a puff of air.

And Molly could have sworn his breath had turned the air foggy for a second.

“Before you fell down the vents, Mera had used her Epithet on me, which caused my ribs to break. My chest felt like it had been dried out and set on fire, but afterwards, when I was thrown… it was different. It burned in both ways, it felt like both, my chest was burning, inflamed from the damage and in the same breath hollowed out and put in a shock freezer.”

Molly cringed hard, but Sylvie frowned, trying to grasp onto words.

“I guess, you could say it scooped… out my chest of everything. Not my heart, that thing was beating in my throat, but something I really… needed, was suddenly missing. It sounds whiney still, but, any longer and I might have gone mad. I don’t know if I passed out because my ribs sucked out the last of my stamina, if it had been the impact of the throw or if it was because my Epithet was gone. It’s… hazy.” He tapped the side of his head, his frown deepening, “I can’t really remember what order things happened, all I really remember is that it was…”

The shudder that went through him was violent, as if his body was trying to shake the memory off like a wet dog.

“… It was empty in here were usually I know is something soft. Something familiar. Do you feel that, too?”

Molly startled a bit at his question, watching him stare at the ground while she put her hand on her own chest, tilting her head.

“For me it’s not soft… It’s calm? Even when I’m really stressed and afraid, there is always the tiniest part… that lets me know I can breathe.” She petted twice over it, “Where it’s very nice.”

“And now imagine… it’s gone.”

Molly tried her hardest to do so, she had been trying the moment she had wanted to ask Sylvie about it all those months ago. Had sometimes laid in bed, staring at the ceiling and willed herself to understand what it meant to lose a part of herself; if she couldn’t use her bubbles anymore or lessen pain at the speed of a blink. She knew however she would never be able to feel what he did; make herself believe whatever her head came up with was anywhere near the real deal. So instead she chose to watch Sylvie, who was gripping his chest suddenly harder, his face calculated steely.

Sometimes she wondered how he did it.

On one hand he could turn into the whiniest person she knew, grumbling like a toddler when things weren’t going his way and throwing hissy fits over the smallest of things. And then in the exact same instance he was able to turn around and be completely on top of his game, a stuck-up know it all, who had an ego bigger than the sun, calculating in his moves. And even more so the fact that he was genuinely empathetic, helping when help was due.

She honestly didn’t know how he fit that many clashing personalities, it made her head spin.

At this point she was pretty sure he trained in front of a mirror to rest his face even when he was freaking out; she wouldn't put it past him, his therapist mode was really impressive. But it wasn't perfect, she knew him and could tell by now; if he had been alone, his face would have crunched up in pain.

Just remembering hurt, and she could at least bond over that to some degree.

Reaching out and with a little hesitant tap on his hand she reminded him of what he was doing, before she shook her head.

"I can't imagine it, but… I saw what happened. Most parts anyway."

Peeping up from his corner, Giovanni suddenly made himself part of the conversation.

"Me either, but I can tell you what my thing feels like! Scalding hot!"

"Really?" Sylvie's head turned, his hands lowering and lifting an eyebrow, sounding less than impressed by that information, "Doesn't that feel uncomfortable?"

"Of course not! I'm a certified bad dude, my soul is filled with the flames of destruction and crime!" Then Giovanni put a hand to his cheek, rising from his position and turning towards the door once more. "Well, when I'm angry or hungry. Most of the time it's just really warm and homey."

Sylvie slapped a hand to his forehead with a soft smack and Molly shushed Giovanni who was about to say more. Her small smile turned sour; her expression grim when she turned back to the boy beside her.

"We won't let that happen again; getting that bit stolen. Not to you or anybody. We just need to get a second of a chance, that's all." She nodded to herself. "Let's just hope someone of us has a lucky throw and knocks that amulet into the sea."

"I hope the stupid thing cracks to bits when it hits the waves." Giovanni hissed out, "When I beat Bliss Ocean's boss, the Banzai Blaster headquarters are next, mark my words!"

Sylvie tilted his head the tiniest bit: "You need help with that, or…?"

"Pff! Yeah?! Percy already agreed, you come on board, too, Bear Trap!"

"Yeah, okay."

"Cool! What about you, Dr. Yo-Yo?"

"I mean, sure?" He pointed towards the other door, where it looked like Percy had finally decided to lean nonchalantly against the frame. "If she is joining us, I see no problem. It will sound impressive in my documents, too. To have written down "Defeated two criminal organizations". That's fun."

"HECK YEAH, IT WILL BE!" Then he faltered. "But. We won't hurt the minor minions. Most of them really are not that… strong. Or smart. Or have dexterity…"

Sylvie rolled his eyes: “My sheep will take the small fry easily, that little bit of nibbling won’t deal too much damage if I let them make an opening to escape. You can earn yourself a name, Giovanni, beating the elite.”

“HA, good plan! It’s settled then!”

Molly felt her heart swell watching the two.

It had taken them a long while to get along without tearing out each other’s throat at every single opportunity that presented itself, especially when left alone to their own devices. They still acted huffy nowadays, but she knew it was all just a big act and she lived for it, the ridiculousness letting her feel at ease.

But as soon as the feeling came, it lurched to her throat as the train let out a sudden roar and a deafening, high pitched squeak, her hands flying to her ears.

The other two didn’t fare any better and Giovanni was the first to assess the situation, running towards the window, pulling the glass down and looking out of it with a wince.

“Yep. The shore is coming, the train is starting to lose speed.”

“W- we’re here already?” Molly gasped, only for Sylvie to nod.

“Half an hour must have passed. We need to gather the others.”

“On it.”

Giovanni was already sprinting forwards Percy, who opened the door and nodded at him, when Sylvie was settling his legs back to the floor. When he stood up however, he felt the tug on his sleeve, and he looked back at Molly with a questioning look.

“I meant it this time.”

She could see him stiffen up and she tugged him back harder.

“I am your friend and I was for a long time. Not from the start, but… please know that I mean it now.”

With a tug of his own he helped her out of her seat, the grin on his face amused.

“I’ll try to remember from time to time.”

Tackling him into a hug, her arms curling around his neck and pressing her face to his shoulder, he staggered backwards for a moment.

It was still the same with him, every single time she did that; she hoped he’d learn to anticipate her hugs, to let them just happen instead of turning into a board every single time. This time however it took him only a moment to relax and hugged her back, an airy laugh, as if he was catching his breath, leaving him.

With a huff she hugged him tighter.

“I can never decide if you are a mischievous imp or a big softie.”

“I mean, the second one, yeah?” He shrugged in her hold, letting his head rest against hers. “I do conjure sheep after all.”

That made her giggle and she got on her tippy toes to get a better grip around him, not wanting him to leave just yet. Fear started to creep back, slowly but steadily and she hoped to keep this small moment safe just a second longer. She had needed a hug so bad for the last few hours, heck, the last few days, and Sylvie seemed to agree as he buried his head in her hoodie, his glasses bending for sure but not daring to move.

She guessed Sylvie wasn’t a 15-year old who was excited to meet Bliss Ocean's Boss, just like she wasn’t a 12-year-old that was excited at the prospect of losing her second family.

But they had plans for afterwards, so they couldn’t lose.

“HEY! We have an organization to beat up, you guys coming or not?!”

Molly gave one more, short squeeze, leaning back slowly, before she gripped Sylvie’s hands and pretty much dragged her behind him, running towards Giovanni.

The faster they went through this, the faster they would all get home.

End Notes

There we go, now I can sleep more easily.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!